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INTRA-ASIAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: SOUTHEAST ASIA  
(THIRD OF FOUR-PART SERIES)

ANNCR:

THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE COUNTRIES OF ASIA WERE EXAMINED IN DETAIL RECENTLY (MARCH 20) AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ASIAN STUDIES, HELD THIS YEAR IN THE CANADIAN CITY OF TORONTO. VOA'S JOSEPH SULLIVAN WAS THERE, AND IN THIS (THE THIRD OF FOUR) REPORT(S), LOOKS AT THE VIEWS OF ONE AMERICAN SCHOLAR ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TODAY.

VOICE:

THE SCHOLAR IS GUY PAUKER, A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE RAND CORPORATION'S RESEARCH STAFF. MISTER PAUKER OBSERVES THAT IN THE PAST THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA HAVE BEEN BUFFETED BY FORCES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL EMANATING FROM MAJOR OUTSIDE POWERS. BUT TODAY, HE SAYS, THESE COUNTRIES ARE TURNING AWAY FROM PRIMARY DEPENDENCE ON THE GREAT POWERS. THEY ARE, HE SAYS, NOW LOOKING INWARD AND SEEKING PRACTICAL FORMULAS FOR SELF-RELIANCE. IN ADDITION HE SAYS, THEY SEEM TO RECOGNIZE -- LIKE OTHER THIRD-WORLD NATIONS -- THE IMPERATIVE OF CLOSING RANKS IN THE SHARPENING NORTH-SOUTH CONFRONTATION.

THE GREATEST SOURCE OF UNCERTAINTY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TODAY, MISTER PAUKER CONTENDS, CONCERNS THE INTENTIONS OF NORTH VIETNAM'S LEADERS. SOME SOUTHEAST ASIA POLITICAL OBSERVERS, WHO MISTER PAUKER CALLS THE "PESSIMISTS," ASSUME THAT BEING COMMUNIST, THE VIETNAMESE WILL WANT TO ESTABLISH

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE LIKE-MINDED GOVERNMENTS IN THAILAND, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES. BUT OTHERS -- THE "OPTIMISTS" -- HE SAYS, BELIEVE THE VIETNAMESE HIERARCHY WANTS MOST OF ALL TO MOBILIZE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE ECONOMY. AND FROM THIS ASSUMPTION, HE ADDS, STEMS THE VIEW THAT NORTH VIETNAM WILL BE PROMPTED TO ADOPT A CONCILIATORY OR EVEN COOPERATIVE POLICY TOWARD GOVERNMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

NORTH VIETNAM, MISTER PAUKER NOTES, HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED TO JOIN THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, BUT, HE SAYS, HAS INSTEAD BROADCAST APPEALS TO INSURGENTS IN THE AREA TO STEP UP THEIR FIGHT TO OVERTHROW NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE ASEAN MEMBERS. HANOI'S DECLARATIVE POLICY, HE ADMITS, DOES NOT MEAN ITS IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION, BUT, HE SAYS, HANOI'S PUBLICLY-STATED STRATEGY IS THE SOURCE OF SOME UNCERTAINTY.

MISTER PAUKER SAYS THAT THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE MAJOR POWERS EXTERNAL TO THE REGION -- THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA, JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES -- IS ANOTHER SOURCE OF UNCERTAINTY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. BY COINCIDENCE, HE SAYS, ALL FOUR POWERS HAVE ENTERED A PERIOD OF SUCCESSION CRISES WHICH, IN HIS VIEW, MAY DRASTICALLY CHANGE THE INTERNATIONAL SPECTRUM.

IN THE LAST TWO DECADES, MISTER PAUKER OBSERVES, ALL MAJOR POWERS -- WITHOUT EXCEPTION -- HAVE EXPERIENCED THE VOLATILITY OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN SITUATION. NO COUNTRY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, HE SAYS, HAS PROVED TO BE IN THE LONG RUN A RELIABLE POLITICAL ALLY OR ECONOMIC PARTNER AND NO COMMITMENT HAS BEEN IMMUNE TO SUDDEN REVERSALS. UNDERSTANDABLY, HE SAYS, ALL MAJOR POWERS HAVE REASONS TO BE CAUTIONOUS. AND

NONE, HE ADDS, APPEARS TO BE EAGER AT THIS TIME TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE AREA, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE SOVIET UNION IN NORTH VIETNAM.

MISTER PAUKER BELIEVES THAT THE CHANCES FOR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA -- EITHER BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT WITH THE MAJOR EXTERNAL POWERS OR THROUGH A DECLARATION BY COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA -- SEEM LESS FAVORABLE TODAY THAN THEY DID SIX YEARS AGO WHEN THE PRINCIPLE WAS PUT FORTH BY THE ASEAN GROUP. THE SINO-SOVIET CONFRONTATION, HE OBSERVES, IS ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC FEATURES OF DIPLOMATIC LIFE IN THE CAPITALS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. AND THE NOTION THAT PEKING AND MOSCOW WOULD JOIN IN SUCH AN AGREEMENT, HE BELIEVES, IS UNREALISTIC. FURTHERMORE, HE SAYS, NORTH VIETNAM'S AGGRESSIVE STANCE TOWARD THE MEMBERS OF ASEAN IS HARDLY AN AUSPICIOUS SETTING FOR A POLICY OF NEUTRALIZATION... THE ESSENCE OF WHICH IS NON-INTERFERENCE AND THE RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE.

THE SEARCH BY THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR NEW OPTIONS IN AN UNPREDICTABLE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, MISTER PAUKER CONCLUDES, WILL NOT BE EASY. THE FACT THAT THESE COUNTRIES ARE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED AT THE CROSSROADS OF CONTINENTS AND O-ECEANS, HE SAYS, PRECLUDES THEIR ISOLATION FROM THE WORLD'S MAINSTREAM. AT THE SAME TIME, HE PREDICTS, THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA WILL REMAIN VULNERABLE TO THE THREAT OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND REGIONAL TENSIONS GENERATED TO A LARGE DEGREE BY THEIR OWN NATIONALISM.

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